AIR WAR COLLEGE

RESEARCH REPORT

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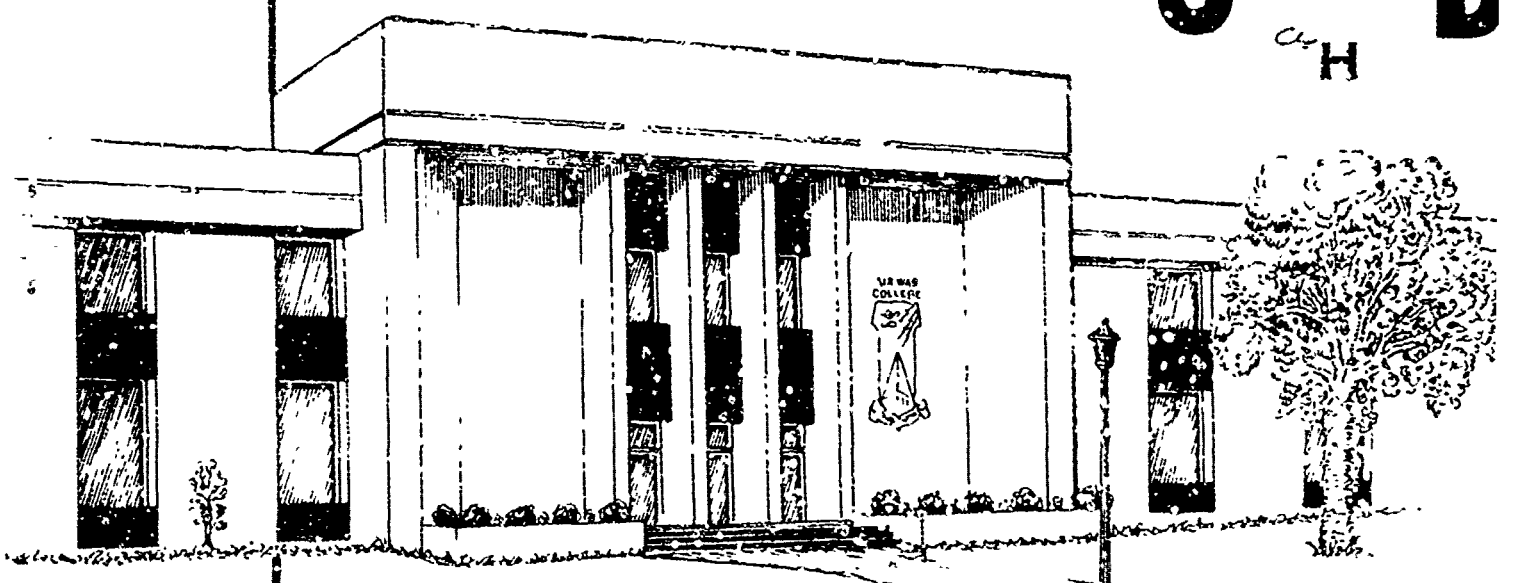
AIR POWER IN LOW-INTENSITY CONFLICT

By LIEUTENANT COLONEL GARY N. SCHNEIDER



AIR UNIVERSITY
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

AIR WAR COLLEGE
AIR UNIVERSITY

AIR POWER IN LOW-INTENSITY CONFLICT

by

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A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY

IN

FULFILLMENT OF THE RESEARCH

REQUIREMENT

Thesis Advisor: Lieutenant Colonel Joseph L. Ryan

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This research report represents the views of the author and does not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the Air War College or Department of the Air Force.

AIR WAR COLLEGE RESEARCH REPORT ABSTRACT

TITLE: Air Power in Low-Intensity Conflict

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According to the Air Force FY 87 Report to Congress, "low-intensity conflicts will probably be the most pervasive threat to free world security for the remainder of the century." Most military members are uninformed and lack a basic understanding required to command and manage in this low-intensity environment. This research report is directed at the field grade military officer. It will provide a brief definition and review of the history of low-intensity conflict. The purpose is to help the reader formulate ideas on how the military should train and posture to prepare for the conflicts of the future.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Lieutenant Colonel Gary N. Schneider is a command pilot with approximately 5000 flying hours. He was awarded a B.Sc from Ohio State University in 1968 and M.Sc. in Operations Management from the University of Arkansas in 1976. He attended Squadron Officer School in residence in 1975 and Air Command and Staff College in residence in 1980. Colonel Schneider has 1340 combat hours in the O-2B and B-52 aircraft. He is the recipient of the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Meritorious Service Medal with 3 Oak Leaf Clusters, and The Air Medal with 6 Oak Leaf Clusters.

SECTION I

INTRODUCTION

> . . . they fought without order, in squads or crowds, often as individual snipers, hiding behind hedgerows, spreading out then rallying, in a way that astonished their enemies who were entirely unprepared for these manoeuvers; they were seen to run up to cannons and steal them from under the eyes of the gunners who hardly expected such audacity. They marched to combat, which they called "aller au feu," when they were called by their parish commandant, chiefs taken from their ranks and named by them centurians, so to speak, who had more of their confidence than did the generals chance had given them; in battle as at the doors of the churches on Sunday, they were surrounded by their acquaintances, their kinfolk and their friends; they did not separate except when they had to fly in retreat. After the actions, whether victors or vanquished, they went home, took care of their usual tasks, in fields or shops, always ready to fight. (1:4)
>
> Joseph Clemenceau 1793

As we begin a study of low-intensity conflict, we find ourselves in a situation similar to that of our National Security Council and the Congress: we do not understand the concept. It is important to come to grips with this problem because, according to the Air Force FY 87 Report to the 99th Congress, "low-intensity conflicts will probably be the most pervasive threat to the Free World for the remainder of the century."(2:4) Before doctrine and policy can be developed for the conduct of low-intensity conflict, the concept must be carefully examined. The term, low-intensity conflict, is very widely used. It has found its way into speeches and news articles covering commando raids, counterrevolutionary operations, and even antidrug activity. Despite the common usage of the term, there is no clear or universal definition of low-intensity conflict. A review of some definitions of low-intensity conflict will highlight the complexity of the subject while defining the parameters.

In 1976, the RAND Corporation attempted to establish parameters of low-intensity conflict and to identify its possible implications for national security planning. Their effort failed to produce a concise definition. (3:73) The Air University Center for Aerospace Research, Doctrine, and Education (CADRE) conducted a workshop devoted entirely to the exchange of ideas on low-intensity conflict. Officers from all of the services and prominent civilians from government, universities, and business participated in the workshop. At the start, a policy panel developed a working definition of low-intensity conflict:

> Non-nuclear situations ranging from terrorism, crises, and small wars to revolutions which require tailored limited responses short of national mobilization and often in conjunction with host regimes and third countries. The responses are likely to be military or paramilitary for short situations, but of mixed political-economic-military and other actions for revolutionary and protracted conflicts. (4:XII)

In March 1986, then Air Force Chief of Staff, General Charles A. Gabriel called low-intensity conflict a "broad term used to characterize conflicts that occur below the threshold of theater warfare--everything from regional conflicts to guerrilla action and terrorism." (5:102) A more current Air Force definition of low-intensity conflict is "generally confined to a geographic area and . . . often characterized by constraints on weaponry and tactics." (6:50)

Perhaps one of the most complete definitions of low-intensity conflict was presented by Colonel Thomas Fabyanic USAF (Ret) in an article entitled "War, Doctrine, and the Air War College."

> It (LIC) is a conflict that encompasses several distinct types of hostilities and would include wars of national liberation, insurgency, revolution, and guerrilla warfare. In addition to these traditional types of combat, low-intensity conflict would include sabotage, counterterrorism, and hostage-taking and rescues. Thus there are several points on the spectrum at the level of low-intensity

> conflict, and each has its distinctive characteristics. Additionally, each has its own grammar and logic, although again considerable overlap exists. For example, wars of national liberation, insurgency, revolution, guerrilla war, and civil war normally would have a similar objective, i.e., overthrow of an existing government and thus they would emplcy similar means. The government's objective, by contrast, would be survival and elimination of the threat. Its means, however, could differ significantly from the opposing force simply because established governments do not ordinarily maintain irregular forces as central elements of their force structures. And unless a threatened government wishes to fight with dissimilar forces (i.e., conventional ones), modification becomes necessary. (7:11)

The purpose for listing these definitions was not to highlight the ambiguity in the study of low-intensity conflict but was to provide insight into the complexity and diversity of the subject. Additional definitions would only be confusing. The following items have been extracted from a number of different definitions and discussions of low-intensity conflict to form a list of characteristics commonly associated with low-intensity conflict.

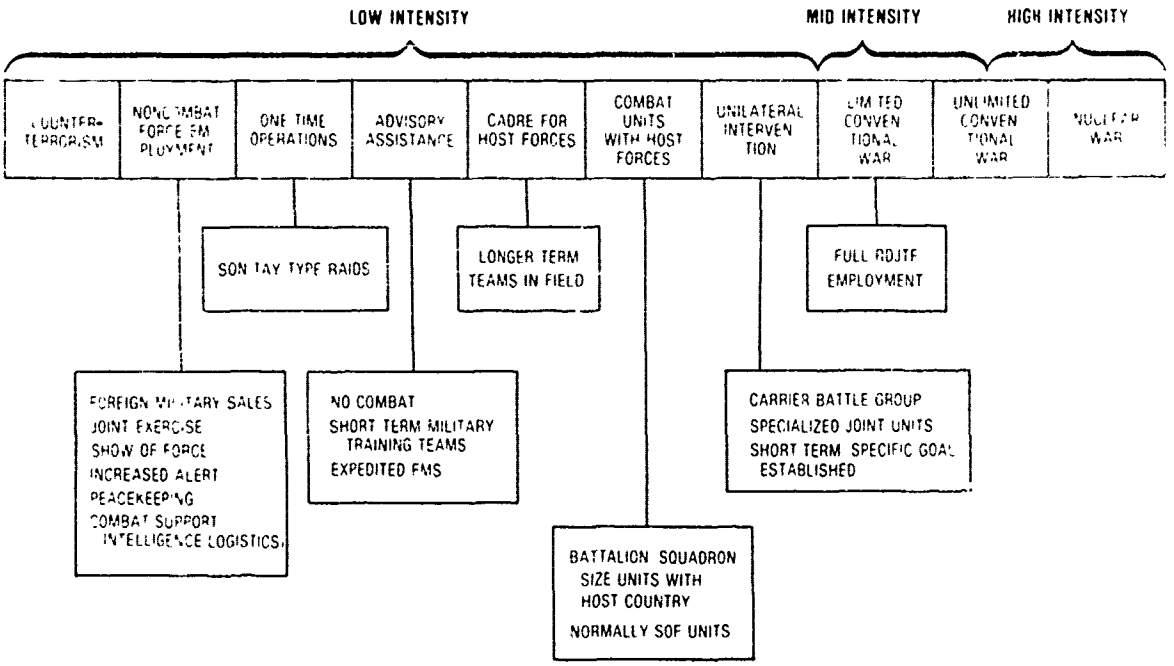
Low-Intensity Conflict:

- is nonnuclear warfare.
- encompasses conflict ranging from counterterrorism to mid-intensity conventional warfare.
- does not conform to conventional tactics and strategies.
- does not fit traditional boundaries of warfare.
- is highly political and psychosocial in origin and content.
- has as its center of gravity the political, social, and cultural fabric of the nation.
- is limited in scope but is likely to be protracted.
- is likely to occur in the developing countries.
- is growing in frequency.
- lacks a precise definition.

Lt Col Dave Dean developed a low-intensity conflict chart that serves as an excellent graphic depiction of low-intensity conflict and the spectrum of warfare. The chart not only describes the spectrum of conflict, it also includes the types of military response likely to be associated with the various phases. (See figure 1-1)

The origin of the term "low-intensity conflict" is a modern one; perhaps the product of the Kennedy Administration's efforts to counter Soviet expansionism in Cuba and Central America through a counterinsurgency doctrine. It may have evolved during the Vietnam War where special operations forces were used extensively. Whatever the source, since its entrance into the defense vocabulary, low-intensity conflict has become the jargon for every type of warfare from terrorism to counterrevolutionary activities. The origin of the term is really of little importance. On the other hand, the nature of low-intensity conflict is of utmost importance if we are to develop effective policy, strategies, and capabilities to counter this pervasive threat.

Now that all of this has been said, we must admit that the United States is unprepared and ill-equipped to deal with the existing low-intensity threat. To even further compound the problem, few people, including the Defense Department itself, really understand low-intensity conflict. Hopefully this study will shed new light on the subject and will help prepare future policy makers to face the prime challenge of the century.



Low-Intensity Conflict (4:177)

Chart

figure 1-1

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SECTION II

HISTORY OF LOW-INTENSITY CONFLICT

It is not surprising that low-intensity conflict, although by many other names, dates back to primitive times. This type of warfare was documented as early as the fifteenth century before Christ. Low-intensity warfare techniques were commonly used by the weak and poorly equipped to resist superior armies. The Bible, in the Book of Judges, records a classic example of low-intensity warfare. In this example, Gideon led a small hand-picked group of Israelites against a much larger Midianite army. Gideon and his troops used darkness and surprise to confuse the Midianites, forcing them to abandon their camps and flee into the hills. In the two centuries preceding and two following the birth of Christ, Jews repeatedly harassed a much larger and well-organized Roman army using small bands and raiding parties.

In more recent times, the low-intensity form of warfare came to be known as "partisan" or "guerrilla" warfare. According to Gérard Chaliand, these wars were

> . . . characteristic of social and religious movements and has even enabled people to avoid taxation, but it has also been one of the most important forms of resistance to aggression and foreign occupation, notably during the expansion of the Roman, Ottoman, and Napoleonic empires and during the European expansion in the nineteenth century. These tactics played a not unimportant role in the American War of Independance, as fought by Marion, also known as the Swamp Fox. Apart from the Vendée uprising during the French Revolution, however, the real classics of this period were the wars of national resistance in Tyrol (1809), in Russia (1812), and in Spain (1803-1813) giving us the term "guerrilla." More than any other ideology, modern nationalism managed to extend this guerrilla warfare beyond the regional of local confines. (1:2)

These guerrilla tactics were normally carried out by irregular troops against the rear of the enemy or by peasants in support of a regular army. Napoleon suffered severe losses at the hands of the Russian peasants who disrupted his supply lines, captured his convoys, and forced him to retreat to France leaving behind a hungry and defeated Grande Armée. This peasant enthusiasm was probably not due to nationalism or loyalty to the regular army who they were at odds with only a few years earlier. They rallied to defend their homes, to protect their families, and to keep from starving when the Grande Armée plundered their crops and livestock.

> . . . guerrilla warfare is the reaction of the peasant who is not paid when his cow or his wheat is taken from him. When the nation sounds a call to arms, he may be willing to risk his life and that of his children for the cause, without grumbling too much in the process; but there are limits to his forebearance. It is not just in the songs that he prefers his two red-daubed white oxen to his wife; he is willing to die defending them and will fight for them with an ardor that no patriotism could elicit. This peasant attitude was perfectly familiar to the generals of the time. It was not unheard of for soldiers to be brought before a firing squad for having taken a few cherries from a nearby tree during a break in a march. (1:38)

The generals of the time recognized the guerrilla's capability to disrupt supply lines or perhaps an entire campaign, however, few of them recognized the political potential in guerrilla warfare. Because of this, low-intensity or guerrilla warfare was still not considered to be particularly relevant. It wasn't until 1863 and again in 1895 that Cuba launched two major guerrilla offensives against Spanish domination. In Cuba, the counterinsurgency techniques were taken farther than ever before. The outcome was, the island of Cuba ceased to be a crown dependency. (1:3)

The evolution of partisan warfare appears to be linked, at least in part, to the availability and portability of weapons. "When armor was a luxury only a few warriors could afford, it conferred such superiority that the warrior had nothing to fear from the wrath of the locals. The advent of the crossbow and, even more so, of firearms turned the tables in favor of those who could set an ambush." (1;39)

As we noted earlier, guerrilla warfare came into its own during the nineteenth century as a response to European expansion into Asia and Africa. The French, for example, fought for seventeen years in Algeria and for ten years in Vietnam against partisan forces. Despite the numerous and protracted guerrilla wars, few military writers of the time recognized it as a viable form of warfare. The bulk of the emphasis was on more modern forms of combat. The machine gun, the howitzer, and firepower in general caused the military strategists to think in terms of mobilization, transportation, and resupply of mass armies.

World War I was fought using regular army and conventional naval forces. Only one small segment of the war was even remotely related to guerrillas. T.E. Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia) is generally regarded as one of the greatest leaders of guerrilla forces. He is credited with organizing irregular Arab forces and conducting a brilliant campaign against the Turks between 1916 and 1918. His efforts eventually freed Arabia from Turkish domination. Again, however, the feats of irregular forces were overshadowed by technology, the employment of mechanized armies, and the use of airpower.

During World War II, partisan campaigns were fought against the Germans and the Japanese. In Greece and the U.S.S.R., this type of

warfare achieved substantial results. In 1941, Joseph Stalin appealed to his people to form partisan groups. In just two years, his mobilization effort grew from 30,000 to over 250,000 irregulars, following the classical tradition of earlier armies. The Germans even formed specialized (hunting commando) troops to counter these partisan forces. (1:5) The Soviets developed the political infrastructure to support a guerrilla style warfare. As soon as the U.S.S.R. was invaded by the Germans, the resistance movement sprang into action. Soviet irregular forces operated successfully behind German lines much as the Russian peasants had done against Napoleon's army 130 years ago. The Soviet irregular forces again demonstrated the linkage between technology and guerrilla warfare.

> The enormous quantities of war material that armies trail along with them often provides an excellent target for guerrilla operations. These operations are aimed particularly at communications, and modern warfare relies more than ever before on its transport facilities, not only to move goods and materials up to the front but also to keep the whole machinery of warfare production turning.
>
> Rail and road communications offer endless opportunities to the ill-intentioned passerby: oil gauges can be tampered with, gearboxes gritted up, wheels unscrewed, garages burned down and so on. To keep all relevant installations under surveillance at all times requires extensive personnel. (1:49)

In military doctrine prior to the twentieth century, the partisans always operated in support of regular armies. Guerrilla warfare was waged continuously, however, it failed to play a major role in the "great wars." They were thought to be patriotic wars. They gravitated to the right, sometimes to the left, sometimes toward Facism and sometimes toward Communism. Guerrilla politics were usually inchoate, unless, as in China, a political party sponsored the struggle in the first place. (2:152)

As our study of the history of low-intensity warfare draws closer to the present, we find two wars, China and Vietnam that have had significant impacts on the way wars will be fought in the future. China and Vietnam were unique, because, for the first time, low-intensity or "revolutionary warfare" found its way into the political doctrine. This time, Mao Tse-tung revived a revolutionary inclination within the Chinese peasantry. In 1937, China was at war with Japan. Chinese regular armies were quickly beaten by the Japanese. The Japanese did not, however, have sufficient manpower to occupy and control all of China. Mao saw that this war would be protracted, so, even before the war broke out, he stressed the importance of mobile warfare and operations by guerrilla groups.

Mao derived the guerrilla doctrine from the writings of Sun Tzu and his own experiences during the establishment of the Red Army in 1927 and the Long March in 1934. Mao's prescription for the war against Japan is summarized as follows:

> The basic aim in war is to preserve one's strength and destroy that of the enemy. In revolutionary war this principle is directly linked with basic political aims--to drive out the Japanese and build an independent, free, and happy(that is Communist) China. The correct approach during the early phase of the war is the strategic defensive or, to be precise, the frequent and effective use of the tactical offensive within the strategic defensive. Guerrilla warfare involves careful planning and flexibility ("breaking up the whole into parts" and "assembling the parts into a whole.") Pure defense and retreat can play only a temporary role in self-preservation; the offensive is the only means of destroying the enemy, and it is also the principle means of self-preservation. Offensive operations must be well organized and not be launched under pressure. (2:252)

The success Mao and his Communist forces enjoyed can, in a very large way, be attributed to his comprehensive guerrilla doctrine, his

understanding of the strategic role of irregular warfare, and the flexibility to integrate the efforts of guerrilla and regular forces. While Mao's guerrillas could not take all of the credit for Japan's military defeat, they did play a major role in the political defeat through their organization and propaganda campaign. The Communists took advantage of the infrastructure Mao had carefully developed prior to the invasion by Japan and the enthusiasm of the activists who faulted the government of China for their failures. Through skillful application of revolutionary doctrine and ideology by a few highly motivated individuals, the Chinese Communists scored a victory over Chiang Kai-chek's China.

Over time, the Chinese pattern of revolutionary warfare came to be widely accepted in the developing nations. Perhaps the most significant application of the Chinese-style revolutionary warfare was the war in Vietnam. The Vietnamese, however, developed yet another, more sophisticated style of guerrilla warfare using guerrilla forces in concert with regular and semiregular forces. For all their technological superiority, the French and expeditionary corps were less effective in counteracting guerrilla tactics, than were the Japanese in China." (2:262)

Vietnam was probably the longest and most complex example of guerrilla activity in a low-intensity conflict seen to date. The Vietnamese Communists used tactics and techniques developed in China. The Vietnamese added their own ingredients, urban terrorism and psychological warfare. They systematically assassinated village leaders, teachers, and anyone else who appeared to be a threat to their success. By 1961, the Communists had "liquidated" about ten thousand village chiefs in a country with about sixteen thousand hamlets and thus had

methodically eliminated all opposition.(2:271) The Vietcong also stressed the use of propaganda and indoctrination in those villages they were able to control.

Unlike the Chinese, the Vietnamese enjoyed numerical superiority. While the Chinese faced a ruthless oriental enemy that was unrestrained by morals or public opinion, "French and American public opinion narrowly circumscribed the scope and choice of measures of anti-guerrilla action." (2:263)

The South Vietnamese were unable to cope with the guerrilla forces in open battle. On one occasion, in a village in the Mekong Delta some forty miles from Saigon, 2,500 men in armoured amphibious personnel carriers backed up by helicopters and aircraft, failed to destroy a group of 200 Vietcong. (3:85) With the Tet offensive of 1968, the war in Vietnam transitioned from guerrilla to regular warfare. This is not to say that guerrilla activity ceased. On the contrary. Guerrilla warfare continued to exist throughout the war. The ultimate defeat of South Vietnam was, however at the hands of the North Vietnamese regular army.

Vietnam, again, illustrates the effect guerrilla or irregular warfare can have on a technologically superior force. As we saw earlier, large numbers of helicopters, tanks, and other military equipment were destroyed by small arms, mines, and the jungle environment, with much smaller losses inflicted upon the guerrillas. The U.S. eventually withdrew from Vietnam with the knowledge that they could have destroyed the insurgents only by "applying a strategy that would have been unacceptable to a democratic society." (2:276)

Today we have some on-going low-intensity conflicts to observe. In Afghanistan, for example, the Soviet-supported government occupys the cities and military installations. The peasants from six different factions form the resistance. To date, the Afghan rebels (Mujahedin) have not organized or been able to develop a sophisticated infrastructure to support the resistance. As it stands, the Afghan war is not a struggle for freedom organized around a spirit of nationalism. It, instead, resembles the revolutionary style of warfare we saw in Russia and France in the nineteenth century.

Afghanistan is currently a war of independence being fought by small groups using primitive and World War II weapons or captured Soviet equipment. The rebels have, however, been quite effective against convoys, tanks, and helicopters. Casualties have been high for the guerrillas, but the Soviet commandos and paratroopers, backed by jets and helicopter gunships, have suffered severe losses as well. The Soviets involved in Afghanistan, much like the U.S. in Vietnam, have become disillusioned by the war and the losses to the rebels. The Afghan government has declared unilateral cease-fires in an effort to gain national reconciliation. The cease-fires are normally answered by increases in rebel attacks. The guerrilla leaders say they will not stop fighting until the government is toppled and the Soviet troops have been withdrawn. The guerrilla insurgency began after the Communist party seized power in April 1978 by a military coup. Soviet forces entered Afghanistan in in December 1979, to prop up the government. The war will soon be entering its tenth year. Morale of the Afghan rebels remains high and efforts are being made to unite the six factions into a single resistance movement.

The overwhelming size of U.S. and Soviet nuclear and conventional forces have reduced the probability of war in or above the mid-intensity level. This has already been proven by the fact that there have been no large wars since the conclusion of World War II. On the other hand, Richard Armitage reminds us that:

> Since World War II, the world has seen 2,000 conflicts. Ninety percent of these were low-intensity.
>
> Seventeen countries have fallen to low-intensity conflict since Cuba went Communist.
>
> Twenty-one insurgencies are active today.
>
> And, in counting the other "small" wars, one out of every four countries is engaged in conflict. (4)

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SECTION III

MODES OF LOW-INTENSITY CONFLICT

Just as defining low-intensity conflict and studying its history are important first steps to understanding the concept, it is also desirable to study the modes or types of low-intensity conflict. Low-intensity warfare has become a catchall term for all those categories of unrest that have not grown to full-scale warfare and do not directly involve the major powers. There are those who reserve low-intensity conflict for insurgency and counterinsurgency only. Others use a much broader definition to include terrorism, psychological operations, and covert operations as separate modes. Which of these is correct?

Some differences of opinion are the result of the close association between special operations and low-intensity warfare. To some, they are one in the same. In order to better understand low-intensity conflict, we must delink it from special operations. Special operations are usually surgical, highly focused, very short duration operations. Special operations may occur at any point along the spectrum of conflict. The forces normally dedicated to special operations are assembled from existing conventional units and carefully trained to participate in a specific type of tactical mission. By comparison, low-intensity conflicts are political-social situations which may or may not develop into full-scale revolutions or even guerrilla wars. They are almost always prolonged and the desired outcome is not normally achieved entirely by the military. Let's examine the three modes, revolution, counterrevolution, and guerrilla warfare.

REVOLUTIONS

Revolutions (insurgencies) are attempts by competing powers or organizations to overthrow an existing government. The objective of a revolution is not to destroy the society but to replace the existing government. Revolutions are frequently fanned by religious or ethnic differences, or more frequently, by corrupt governments. Although the use of military power is prevalent, the objectives of the revolution are primarily political. Insurgent activity "...including guerrilla warfare, terrorism, and political mobilization, for example, propaganda, recruitment, front and covert party organizations, and international activity--is designed to weaken government control and legitimacy." (1:2)

Revolutions require a leader or leaders skilled in the political and psychological elements. They must have an ideology or solution for the problems of the people. They must also have the support of the populace which can be urban or rural-based.

> The seizure of power is by a popular or broad-based political movement, the seizure entails a fairly long period of armed conflict, and power is seized in order to carry out a well-advertised political or social program. It also implies a high degree of consciousness about goals and methods, a consciousness that a "revolutionary" war is being fought. (2:817)

A revolution normally begins with organized subversive political activities, agitation, strikes, psychological operations, and terrorist activity. The United States Army Field Circular 100-20 calls this preinsurgency or organization phase the "latent and incipient insurgency." (3:2-9) Not all incipient insurgencies signal the impending overthrow of the government. The serious signs become evident in the second phase of the revolution, the guerrilla phase. (3:2-9)

The second phase (guerrilla phase) occurs when the people have been politically mobilized and are now prepared to engage in violence directed at the existing political system. The transition from one phase to the next is subtle. To better distinguish between the two, we see that the guerrilla phase is characterized by external support in the form of weapons, supplies, and monetary aid. In those cases where the insurgents are unable to secure external aid, they sometimes resort to terrorism and kidnapping. "A series of five kidnappings in El Salvador brought leftist guerrillas $18 million in ransom in a single year--more than one-third the amount of the Salvadoran government's annual defense budget." (4:7) These ransoms were used to finance weapons and military equipment.

During the guerrilla phase, terrorism may be directed against the government or the general populace. The goal is to create unrest and confusion which have a psychological impact upon that element of society they hope to change politically. This phase is also characterized by sabotage, assassinations, and destruction of vital lines of communication and valuable government resources.

The final phase (war of movement) occurs when the revolution transitions to conventional conflict between organized insurgent forces and government forces. Guerrilla activity and terrorism continue along with the organized insurgents' attempts to defeat the military and overthrow the government. The final result is an establishment of a new government and initiation of efforts to bring about the desired changes in society. Many revolutions never reach this final phase and none will arrive at this phase without a long period of insurgent activity. (3:2-10)

COUNTERINSURGENCY

Counterinsurgency consists of a wide range or responses to a revolution including economic assistance, intelligence support, psychological operations in the form of media and information programs, and counterinsurgency policy planning. These responses are directed at maintaining law and order and correcting or eliminating the conditions that inspired the insurgency.

Military and nonmilitary efforts will be necessary to mount an effective counterinsurgency. In order for the government to counter the insurgent threat, they must implement civic action programs and carefully coordinated police operations. Different countermeasures may be required for different segments of society or in different areas of the country. The military can augment the civilian police in protecting the populace from the insurgents and terrosism. The military can also draw from its communication and transportation resources to link the supporting segments of society and strengthen the government's infrastructure. These actions must be flexible and carefully coordinated to ensure that efforts do not run counter to one another.

> According to John McCuen, in order to cope with an insurgent organizational threat and the low-level terrorism and sporadic guerrilla attacks which often accompany it, the military must be oriented toward population contact. Armed units should be positioned in a large number of small posts allowing for protection of and mixing with the local people. (5:818)

In order to be successful the counterinsurgency forces must have the total support of the government and the general population. A substantial amount of effort must be devoted to securing this support and improving the morale of the people.

GUERRILLA OPERATIONS

As stated earlier, guerrilla operations normally characterize the second phase of the insurgency. The goal of the guerrilla is to separate the people from the government and thus shifting the balance of power away from the government and toward the insurgents. The following is Mao's Primer on Guerrilla War. This primer provides an insight into the the concept of guerrilla warfare, the organization, and the tactics.

Mao's Primer on Guerrilla War

Translated by
Brigadier General Samuel B. Griffith II (6:1)

Without a political goal, guerrilla warfare must fail, as it must if its political objectives do not coincide with the aspirations of the people and their sympathy, cooperation, and assistance cannot be gained. The essence of guerrilla warfare is thus revolutionary in character.

On the other hand, in a war of counterrevolutionary nature, there is no place for guerrilla hostilities. Because guerrilla warfare basically derives from the masses and is supported by them, it can neither exist nor flourish if it separates itself from their sympathies and cooperation.

There are those who do not comprehend guerrilla action, and who therefore do not understand the distinguishing qualities of the people's guerrilla war, who say: "Only regular troops can carry out guerrilla operations." There are others who, because they do not believe in the ultimate success of guerrilla action, mistakenly say: "Guerrilla warfare is an insignificant and highly specialized type of operation in which there is no place for the masses of the people." There are those who ridicule the masses and undermine resistance by wildly asserting that the people have no understanding of the war of resistance.

The political goal must be clearly and precisely indicated to inhabitants of guerrilla zones, and their national consciousness awakened.

There are some militarists who say: "We are not interested in politics but only in the profession of arms." It is vital that these simple-minded militarists be made to realize the relationship between politics and military affairs. Military action is a method used to attain a political goal.

In all armies, obedience of the subordinates to their superiors must be exacted. This is true in the case of guerrilla discipline, but the basis for guerrilla discipline must be the individual conscience. With guerrillas a discipline of compulsion is ineffective.

In any system where discipline is externally imposed, the relationship that exists between officer and man is characterized by indifference of the one to the other. A self-imposed discipline is the primary characteristic of a democratic system in the army.

Further in such an army the mode of living of the officers and the soldiers must not differ too much. This is particularly true in the case of guerrilla troops. Officers should live under the same conditions as their men, for that is the only way in which they can gain from their men the admiration and confidence so vital in war. It is incorrect to hold to a theory of equality in all things, but there must be equality of existence in accepting the hardships and dangers of war.

There is also a unity of spirit that should exist between troops and local inhabitants. The Eighth Route Army put into practice a code known as "Three Rules and Eight Remarks."

Rules: All actions are subject to command; do not steal from the people; be neither selfish nor unjust.

Remarks: Replace the door (used as a bed in summer) when you leave the house; roll up the bedding in which you have slept; be courteous; be honest in your transactions; return what you borrow; replace what you break; do not bathe in the presence of women; do not without authority search the pocketbooks of those you arrest.

Many people think it is impossible for guerrillas to exist for long in the enemy's rear. Such a belief reveals lack of comprehension of the relationship that should exist between the people and the troops. The former may be likened to water and the latter to the fish who inhabit it. How may it be said that these two cannot exist together? It is only undisciplined troops who make the people their enemies and who, like the fish out of its native element, cannot live.

We further our mission by destroying the enemy by propagandizing his troops, by treating his captured soldiers with consideration, and by caring for those of his wounded who fall into our hands. If we fail in these respects, we strengthen the solidarity of the enemy.

The primary function of guerrillas are three: first to conduct a war on exterior lines, that is, in the rear of the enemy; second, to establish bases: last, to extend the war areas. Thus guerrilla participation in the war is not merely a matter of purely local guerrilla tactics but involves strategical considerations.

What is basic guerrilla strategy? Guerrilla strategy must primarily be based on alertness, mobility, and attack. It must be adjusted to the enemy situation, the terrain, the existing lines of communication, the relative strengths, the weather, and the situation of the people.

In guerrilla warfare select the tactic of seeming to come from the east and attacking from the west; avoid the solid, attack the hollow; attack; withdraw; deliver a lightning blow, seek a lightning decision. When guerrillas engage a stronger enemy, they withdraw when he advances; harass him when he stops; strike him when he is weary; pursue him when he withdraws. In guerrilla strategy the enemy's rear, flanks, and other vulnerable spots are his vital points, and there he must be harassed, attacked, dispersed, exhausted, and annihilated.

If we cannot surround whole armies, we can at least partially destroy them; if we cannot kill the enemy troops, we can capture them. The total effect of many local successes will be to change the relative strengths of the opposing forces.

Guerrillas can gain the initiative if they keep in mind the weak points of the enemy. Because of the enemy's insufficient manpower, guerrillas can operate over vast territories; because the enemy is a foreigner and a barbarian, guerrillas can gain the confidence of millions of their countrymen; because of the stupidity of enemy commanders, guerrillas can make full use of their own cleverness.

The leader must be like the fisherman who, with his nets, is able both to cast them and pull them out in awareness of the depth of the water, the strength of the current, or the presence of any obstructions that may foul them. As the fisherman controls his nets, so the guerrilla leader maintains contact with and control over his units.

When the situation is serious, the guerrillas must move with the fluidity of water and the ease of the blowing wind. Ability to fight a war without a rear area is a fundamental characteristic of guerrilla

action, but this does not mean that guerrillas can exist and function over a long period of time without development of base areas. Guerrilla bases may be classified according to their location as; first, mountain bases; second, plain bases; and last, river, lake, and bay bases. The advantages of bases in mountainous areas are evident.

After defeating the enemy in any area, we must take advantage of the period he requires for reorganization to press home our attacks. We must not attack an objective we are not certain of winning. We must confine our operations to relatively small areas and destroy the enemy and traitors in those places. When the inhabitants have been inspired, new volunteers accepted, trained, equipped, and organized, our operations may be extended to include cities and lines of communication not strongly held. We may at least hold these for temporary (if not permanent) periods.

All of these are our duties in offensive strategy. Their object is to lengthen the period the enemy must remain on the defensive. Then our military activities and our organization work among the masses of the people must be zealously expanded; and with equal zeal the strength of the enemy attacked and diminished.

How are guerrilla units formed? In (one) case, the guerrilla unit is formed from the people. This is the fundamental type. Upon the arrival of the enemy army to oppress and slaughter the people, their leaders call upon them to resist. They assemble the most valorous elements, arm them with old rifles and bird guns, and thus a guerrilla unit begins.

In some cases where the local government is not determined or

where its officers have all fled, the leaders among the masses call upon the people to resist and they respond. In circumstances of this kind, the duties of leadership usually fall upon the shoulders of young students, teachers, professors, other educators, local soldiery, professional men, artisans, and those without a fixed profession, who are willing to exert themselves to the last drop of their blood.

There are those who say "I am a farmer" or "I am a student"; "I can discuss literature but not military arts." This is incorrect. There is no profound difference between the farmer and the soldier. You must have courage. You simply leave your farms and become a soldier. That you are a farmer is of no difference, and if you have education, that is so much the better. When you take your arms in hand, you become soldiers; when you are organized, you become military units. Guerrilla hostilities are the university of war.

Still another type of unit is that organized from troops that come over from the enemy. It is continually possible to produce disaffection in their ranks and we must increase our propaganda efforts and foment mutinies among such troops. Immediately after mutiny, they must be received into our ranks and organized. Inregard to this type of unit, it may be said that political workamong them is of the utmost importance.

Guerrilla organizations can also be formed from bands of bandits and brigands. Many bandit groups pose as guerrillas and it is only necessary to correct their political beliefs to convert them.

In spite of inescapable differences in the fundamental types of guerrilla bands, it is possible to unite them to form a vast sea of guerrillas.

All the people of both sexes from the ages of sixteen to forty-five must be organized into self-defense units, the basis of which is voluntary service. As a first step, they must procure arms, then both military and political training must be given them. Their responsibilities are: local sentry duties, securing information of the enemy, arresting traitors, and preventing the dissemination of enemy propaganda.

When the enemy launches a guerrilla-suppression drive, these units, armed with what weapons there are, are assigned to certain areas to deceive, hinder, and harass him. Thus the self-defense units assist the combatant guerrillas.

They have other functions. They must furnish stretcher-bearers to carry the wounded, carriers to take food to the troops, and comfort missions to provide the troops with tea and porridge. Each member of these groups must have a weapon, even if the weapon is only a knife, a pistol, a lance, or a spear.

In regard to the problem of guerrilla equipment, it must be understood that guerrillas are lightly armed attack groups that require simple equipment.

Guerrilla bands that originate with the people are furnished with revolvers, pistols, bird guns, spears, big swords, and land mines and mortars of local manufacture. Other elementary weapons are added, and as many new-type rifles as are available are distributed. After a period of resistance, it is possible to increase the amount of equipment by capturing it from the enemy.

An armory should be established in each guerrilla district for the manufacture and repair of rifles and for the production of

cartridges, hand grenades, and bayonets. Guerrillas must not depend too much on an armory. The enemy is the principal source of their supply. For destruction of railway trackage, bridges, and stations in enemy-controlled territory, it is necessary to gather together demolition materials. Troops must be trained in the preparation and use of demolitions, and demolition units must be organized in each regiment.

If Western medicines are not available, local medicines must be made to suffice.

Propaganda materials are very important. Every large guerrilla unit should have a printing press and mimeograph stone. They must also have paper on which to print propaganda leaflets and notices.

In addition, it is necessary to have field glasses, compasses, and military maps. An accomplished guerrilla unit will acquire these things.

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SECTION IV

AIR POWER IN LOW-INTENSITY CONFLICT

The first use of aircraft in combat by the United States was against irregular forces. This occurred in 1916 when General Pershing used the 1st Aero Squadron, equipped with Curtiss JN-3s to pursue Pancho Villa and his guerrillas as they fled into Mexico. Although General Pershing experienced only limited success in this expedition, he did display the unique capabilities of aircraft in terms of reconnaissance, surveillance, and in maintaining communication with deployed troops.

In subsequent conflicts, aircraft proved their worth against massed insurgents, and in providing intelligence on locations or the direction of travel of guerrillas on the move. The guerrillas, however, made quick adjustments to their tactics in response to the airplane. They limited their use of base camps and moved these camps frequently to avoid detection. They resorted to more hit-and-run operations using small, mobile bands of guerrillas. Despite these tactical changes, the guerrillas suffered under the flexibility of air power. During World War II, "....a new role for airpower emerged--supporting the operations of partisans and small conventional units behind enemy lines. In this context, airlift, communication, and medical evacuation provided by air assets were paramount. Delivery of firepower played only a minor role." (1:57) During the Huk rebellions in the Philippines, Ramon Magsaysay used air power to his advantage in countering guerrilla operations.

In addition to the previously mentioned roles, aircraft were being used to disseminate propaganda. Some light aircraft were equipped

with speaker systems and leaflet dispensers. In some cases, defectors or captured insurgents were taken up in aircraft to help locate base camps and lines of communication used by insurgents.

> The concept of a U.S. air commando unit sprang from General H.H. Arnold's fertile imagination. He wanted to see what air power could do to support ground forces operating behind enemy lines. Thus, the mission of the 1st Air Commando Group was to support the 12,000 British troops of Brigadier Orde C. Wingate operating behind the Japanese lines in Burma. Wingate's troops were placed behind the Japanese lines by air and were resupplied entirely by air. The 1st Air Commando Group quickly became adept at air drops, short-field landings, evacuations, resupply, and strike missions. The group also became proficient at independent action and getting things done under the most trying of conditions. Perhaps most importantly the airmen and the men on the ground learned how to work together effectively and to develop workable joint operational plans. (2:86)

It is interesting to note that little mention was made of security assistance, civic action, psychological operations, or support for the existing government. Most of the military effort appeared to be devoted to firepower and unconventional operations.

As the U.S. became involved in the war in South Vietnam, the air commando units were again revived. In response to President Kennedy's demands for a force capable of combatting the the guerrilla threat, the Air Force formed the Special Air Warfare Center at Eglin AFB, in 1962. This new unit was made up of the 1st Air Commando Group and the 1st Combat Applications Group. The 1st Air Commando Group was to train the airmen of friendly countries in low-level parachute resupply, close air support, use of flares for night operations, and other counterguerrilla techniques. They were equipped with C-47, C-46, T-28, B-26, and U-10 aircraft. The 1st Combat Applications Group was tasked to develop doctrine, tactics, techniques, and hardware for use by the 1st Air Commando Group. (2:91)

The special operations forces were given old, unsophisticated aircraft because thay had proven ruggedness, reliability, and simplicity. Most of the aircraft were available in large numbers and at very reasonable prices. In some cases, these aircraft were already in the inventories of many of the countries involved in counterinsurgency operations. These aircraft were propeller-driven and could be operated from primitive airfields with relatively short runways.

The Special Air Warfare Center also fielded mobile training teams to be deployed to countries involved in counterinsurgency or who anticipated future involvement. Team members received basic language training for their area of assignment. They were also trained to analyze the political climate of the host country, to evaluate the terrain, and to assess the special needs and demands of the populace. The teams assisted the host country in training their police and military forces in counterinsurgency operations. One team, assigned to Howard Air Force Base, Canal Zone, "flew teachers to remote areas of Latin America to instruct the villagers in public sanitation and health. They flew a U.S. Army team into villages to drill wells and improve agriculture." (3:51) Civic action was an integral part of the Air Commando operations in Latin America. It is unfortunate the Air Commandos were unable to successfully carry the same techniques to Southeast Asia.

The 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron, formerly "Jungle Jim" was tasked to train the Vietnamese in counterinsurgency air operations. Although there was an increasing interest in transferring responsibility for counterinsurgency operations to the indigenous forces of South Vietnam, there was little progress made along those lines.

Lieutenant Colonel Dean quotes Colonel Joseph W. Kittenger, Jr., in his article "USAF in Low-Intensity Conflict:"

> "While most of the missions were flown with Vietnamese aboard, these Vietnamese were not pilot trainees. (rules of engagement stipulated that Vietnamese Air Force personnel must be aboard the aircraft on all combat missions) Most of them were low-ranking enlisted men and were so unmotivated to fly that the air commandos had to take away their boots at night so they could not run away. None of them knew anything about flying or wanted anything to do with it. There was not any intention whatsoever to teach them to fly ever. They could not touch the controls if they wanted to. Thus, even in the early days of Vietnam, the commandos relied more on doing it themselves than on training local forces. (3:54)

As the war in Vietnam continued, less and less emphasis was placed on true counterinsurgency doctrine. Those forces originally earmarked for the counterinsurgency mission were absorbed by the conventional war. The AC-47 and the AC-119 were used to provide close air support as were the A-1 and T-28. Perhaps the only remaining U.S. Air Force units that still had a true counterinsurgency mission were the psychological operations units assigned to the 14th Special Operations Wing. These units continued to disseminate leaflets and live and prerecorded messages. For the most part their effort was only a token one that received little if any attention despite some very significant results. When the U.S. withdrew from Vietnam, most of the special operations aircraft were left with the Vietnamese and ultimately were captured or destroyed by the North Vietnamese. At the conclusion of the War in Vietnam, the Special Operations Force was dissolved. The majority of the expertise was lost as well as the aircraft. Only a few AC-130, MC-130, and helicopter assets remained. For the most part, these had been the aircraft that played a conventional role in Vietnam and could do little in support of a country struggling with an insurgency.

Vietnam clearly proved that sophisticated, supersonic aircraft and electronic systems were ineffective and inappropriate for the low-intensity conflict. Fast moving aircraft are unable to acquire a slow moving target on the ground. They are totally ineffective against small, mobile groups of guerrillas in a jungle or heavily wooded area. Even when a forward air controller is used, the high performance aircraft can remain on station for only a limited period of time before it must either return to its main operating base or find an airborne tanker. In the time required to order another set of fighters or for the fighters to refuel, the target will probably disappear.

Most military experts will agree that a more effective form of aerial weaponry for this conflict is a small, maneuverable aircraft. The O-1 and O-2 aircraft were very effective not only in Vietnam, but in South and Central America. These aircraft can remain airborne for longer periods of time. They can serve as a forward air control aircraft or as a platform for psychological operations. These aircraft can provide aerial surveillance or shift to transport military or civilian personnel from one location to another. Armament for these aircraft, however, was limited to aircrew weapons and marking rockets.

The T-28, A-1, and AC-47 provided firepower in support of the counterinsurgency effort in Vietnam. Again, they were effective because they could remain on target for an extended period of time. They were, in addition, simple to maintain and capable of operating from less sophisticated airfields.

Today, these aircraft are no longer in the U.S. inventory and very little is being done to develop replacement aircraft. Available

aircraft now represent a level of technology that can not be made available to the third world countries. The U.S. has directed its research and development toward the big war. Aircraft are equipped with computer and integrated circuit systems. They have high resolution radars and tank-killing weapon systems on board. These are obviously the direct opposite of the type of aircraft we have described as best suited for the low-intensity conflict. A lot has been said about the enhanced special operations capability. New AC-130 and MC-130 aircraft will be entering the inventory in the years to come. These are excellent unconventional warfare aircraft with some utility in the low-intensity environment, but they do not fulfill the need for a small utility type aircraft that can land at a small remote airfield to deliver a doctor or pick up a defector.

Helicopters can do part of the job. As has been pointed out, air mobility is important to a successful counterinsurgency operation. Helicopters can operate out of unprepared airfields and can hover over a suspected guerrilla camp. They are ideal for infiltration and exfiltration. On the other hand, helicopters are expensive, difficult to support and maintain, and are not apt to be made available in large numbers to third world nations. Helicopters operating close to the ground are much more vulnerable to small arms fire and small surface-to-air missiles. Afghanistan proved the vulnerability of helicopters to the Soviets. Afghan rebels have taken a very heavy toll on Mi-8 and Mi-24 helicopters operating in the mountains of Afghanistan. Most of their kills were credited to individuals using only small arms and primitive anti-aircraft weapons.

> To date, the Soviets have used no low, slow fixed-wing counter-insurgency aircraft or anything similar to the AC-130. Overall, the Soviets do not have forces, doctrines, or weapons designed for low-intensity conflict. Their current strategy seems to favor what has been termed "migratory genocide" driving the people from the land through terror tactics. (4:12)

The Soviets, like the U.S. are having some difficulty integrating air power and advanced technology to counter the indigenous forces in Afghanistan. Many believe that Afghanistan has proven to be the Soviets' Vietnam.

It is clear that in order to influence internal affairs of countries involved in counterinsurgency activities, the U.S. must make effective use of air power. The U.S. does not have the low-intensity air platforms to conduct these operations and none are programmed for the future. The Air Force deemphasizes these special purpose aircraft and "for budgetary and bureaucratic reasons, finds the idea of low-performance aircraft embarrassing." (4:18) In addition, the U.S. appears to discourage third world nations from buying these low performance aircraft. The thrust of foreign military sales again, appears to be toward the sophisticated aircraft and munitions produced by the U.S. rather than, perhaps, a Pucura-type aircraft that has been employed by South American countries in a dedicated counterinsurgency role.

If the U.S. intends to play a major role in the third world and prevent Soviet expansion through the support of insurgent or revolutionary governments, we must develop a low-intensity doctrine. We must also develop a force structure that includes cheap, simple, fixed-wing aircraft that can be used to counter the insurgents in their own environments.

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SECTION V

CONCLUSIONS

One in four countries around the world is at war today. None of these countries is in danger of a nuclear attack or even large-scale conventional warfare. The warfare we are observing is more insidious and well below the threshold that might trigger even conventional responses. Nuclear weapons have elevated the risk of large wars and, at the same time, have reduced the probability of their occurrence. The Soviets have, as a result, resorted to the use of covert support for insurgencies in the third world nations in an effort to broaden their spheres of influence, while undermining the U.S. influence in these emerging nations.

The U.S. appears to be having difficulty dealing with low-intensity conflict. A reluctance to face the problem is, no doubt, the product of the U.S. experience in Vietnam. Americans do not want to become involved in another protracted war with an unseen enemy. For the U.S. military, the ideal war is one that involves massed troops, tanks, or ships, supported by a technologically superior air force overhead. The low-intensity threat, however, is very labor intensive. It has on many occasions defeated the products of technology through covert techniques and cunning.

Low-intensity conflict is political, economic, and psychological. It relies little on armed troops for success. In order to be successful in a low-intensity conflict, the U.S. must be able to obtain political support and take full advantage of the psychological factors. These

are the elements that pose the biggest challenges to the U.S. position with respect to low-intensity warfare. Dr Sarkesian sums up the U.S. position in the following quote:

> Seeing conflicts through conventional lenses heavily influenced by Judeo-Christian heritage, Americans tend to categorize wars into good and evil protagonists. It follows that the character of the enemy must be clear and the threat to the United States must be immediate and challenging. U.S. involvement must be clearly purposeful and in accord with democratic norms. This "Pearl Harbor" mentality is more-or-less reflected in America's current posture. (1:7)

The U.S. must examine its position on low-intensity conflict. We must accept the fact that if we are to counter the growth of Communism in the third world, we must formulate a low-intensity doctrine. We must give serious consideration to developing a doctrine and force structure to meet the threat. In doing this we must redirect our attention to the lessons learned over the history of low-intensity conflict. These lessons are that low-intensity warfare is not military combat. It is a political and psychosocial conflict that can only be solved from within the host country. The U.S. role can only be one of support and advice. This type of conflict is apt to be prolonged and, as a result, very unpopular with the American public. We must build popular support for third world nations within our own country.

We must build a force structure of trained military personnel to serve as advisors and instructors for counterinsurgent activities. They must be equipped with inexpensive and simple-to-operate weapons and aircraft that can be made available to the host countries in sufficient numbers and with an adequate supply of spares. Everyone involved must be prepared for a protracted war in a foreign and often hostile climate.

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